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ABSTRACT

The stunning rate of change in modern society will make today's education obsolete tomorrow. Limiting educational planning to short-range objectives is no longer sufficient. To be effective, education must be committed to achieving goals and objectives reflective of the desires of the community and of school district personnel. The eight dimensions of comprehensive and efficient educational planning (as selected by Banghart and Trull) are (1) significance, (2) feasibility, (3) relevance, (4) definitiveness, (5) parsimoniousness, (6) adaptability, (7) time, and (8) monitoring. Use of appropriate planning strategies does not guarantee complete success, but it will undeniably strengthen the administrator's judgment, leadership, and vision so that goals are more likely to be met. (Author/PGD)

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# "LONG-RANGE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING"

Educational planning, especially comprehensive educational planning, is a relatively new field for educational decision-makers, following the work of urban, social, transportation, economic, military, industrial, and government planners. The influences and needs of these other planners are compelling educators to reexamine existing educational programs and the effect of education in solving urban and suburban problems. Most school districts make good plans only partially, if at all. Most of the planning systems used are limited to relatively short-range objectives (i.e., data gathering, curriculum planning, the developing of educational specifications, and annual budgeting). Only in rare instances has planning been used for comprehensive purposes and extended to long-range goals.

The purpose of comprehensive educational planning is to develop a long-range guide that will use the best available resources to attain educational objectives and permit continuous evaluation of the problems of the planning process, itself. Another purpose of comprehensive educational planning is to help assure the accomplishment of the educational goals set by today's society for tomorrow's achievements.

The Educational Policy Center at Syracuse University has reported the following: (A) half of what a person learns is no longer valid when he reaches middle age; (B) one-third of the items on supermarket shelves did not exist ten years ago; (C) three-fourths of all people employed by

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industry 12 years from now will be producing goods that have not yet been conceived of; (D) more mathematics has been created since 1900 than during the entire preceding period of human history; (D) half of what a graduate engineer studies today will be obsolete in 10 years; half of what he will need to know is not yet known by anyone; (F) 60 million jobs will change in character in the next generation; (G) six-year olds now starting school can expect their vocations to change three times during their lifetime.

Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock has severely criticized education in that book; "Our schools face backward toward a dying system, rather than forward to the emerging new society. Their vast energies are applied to cranking out industrial men-people, tooled for survival in a system that will be dead before they are." Toffler in another book, Learning For Tomorrow, says "all education springs from some image of the future. If the image of the future held by a society is grossly inaccurate, its education system will betray its youth." Toffler goes on with this discussion equating with it an Indian tribe which for centuries sailed its dugouts on the river at its doorstep. "During all this time the economy and culture of the tribe depended upon fishing, preparing and cooking the products of the river, growing food in soil fertilized by the river, building boats and appropriate tools. So long as the rate of technological change in such a community stays slow, so long as no wars, invasions, epidemics, or other natural disasters upset the even rhythm of life, it is simple for the tribe to formulate a workable image of its own future, since tomorrow merely repeats yesterday. What happens to such a tribe," Toffler asks," when it pursues its traditional

methods unaware that 500 miles upstream men are constructing a gigantic dam that will dry up their branch of the river. Suddenly the tribe's image of the future, the set of assumptions on which its members base their present behavior, becomes dangerously misleading. Tomorrow will not replicate today. The tribal investment in preparing its children to live in a riverine culture becomes a pointless and potentially tragic waste. A false image of the future destroys the relevance of the education effort."

Educational administrators and particularly school district superintendents are learning very quickly the significance of effective short and long-range comprehensive planning. The State of Washington, where I come from, has mandated legislation upon local school districts that have short and long-range implications. It is apparent that the property tax dollar is becoming more regressive and distasteful for many of the electorate to pay each and every year. They want more results for what they see as an endless stream of money to support the local educational school system. Legislators have caught on very quickly. In Washington, for example, the State has decided to mandate legislation that will fund basic education fully by 1981. What this means is that special levies will be phased out but at the expense of lower salaries for all certified and classified personnel, reducing staff, reducing program, and in effect streamlining the operation in a manner that will insure the public that the basic education desired by them is being met. Very simply put, the new legislation mandates that local districts begin to plan immediately for results that will affect the school districts not only tomorrow, but 10, 15, and even 20 years down the road.

One of the most important tasks of the school administrator is to harmonize in every decision and action the requirements of the immediate and long-range future. He cannot sacrifice either without endangering the school district. The administrator must keep his nose to the grindstone while lifting his eyes to the hills--which is quite an acrobatic feat. Or, to vary the metaphor, he cannot afford to say, "We will cross this bridge when we come to it," nor can he afford to say, "It's the next 100 years that count." The administrator not only has to prepare for crossing distant bridges--he has to build them long before he gets there. And if he does not take care of the next 100 days, there will be no next 100 years--there may not even be a next five years.

The Seattle School District, 100 miles north of Longview, is an excellent example of short and long-range planning. Dave Moberly, the Superintendent in Seattle, has accomplished a first for a large city urban school district in the United States. Recently the Board of Education approved a desegregation plan without court order to do so. The traumatic, immediate implications of this decision are many. Nearly two years of planning for the Board decision was generated by many citizens in the community and School District staff members. Short and long-range planning in this case have been integrated into one unified plan of action. Short-range planning will continue in Seattle until sometime in the future when the desegregation plan has really been accepted by the great majority of citizens and students in the School District. I am sure a sigh of relief was heard in the School District offices when the Board of Education made its historic decision to desegregate. However, the Seattle School District will not begin to see the results of

long-range planning until sometime in the future when the plan and all the short-range planning decisions have made the impact necessary to convince people in the District that the desegregation plan, decided upon by the School Board in 1977, is working and producing the results intended to desegregate the School District.

The Longview School District is currently involved in much short and long-range planning. Not only is my District keenly aware of the interest that the Legislature has taken in educational issues, but we are also involved deeply in providing assurance to our constituency that we are concerned about the teaching/learning process and other areas of particular concern that requires short and long-range planning.

More specifically, the Longview School District is deeply involved in a process called Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) (a la Madeline Hunter, UCLA Laboratory School fame). The process simply is a well-researched method that teaches teachers how to teach better. Our short-range plan is to train all members of our certified staff, including administrators, in the principles of ITIP. We hope to accomplish this by the 1979-80 school year. Our long-range payoff may come much later in the future if the results that we will be looking for are improved educational achievement by our students. Our District is also involved in long-range facility planning. We have been involved with a Citizens' Steering Committee, a consultant, the Board of Directors, and staff members in this project for nearly a year and one-half. The decisions being made now in our short-range projections are critical to the eventual long-range results expected by the Committee and Board of Directors. The goals and objectives for the long-range planning program have degenerated into work for staff,

Board, and community members. Whether or not the facility plan will become just a noble effort or the actual commitment of resources that will bring the results envisioned by the Committee and Board of Directors, rests primarily on the community view of the need for improved facilities for the District.

If I were to point out one key element that is needed in a school district if short and long-range planning is truly an on-going exercise of the school district, that element is vision of the Board of Education. Decisions made now by the Board of Education will bring about the results that we look to in the future as a part of the long-range comprehensive planning process.

The only thing we know about the future is that it is going to be different. As Drucker stated so well, "For the manager, future is discontinuity, and yet the future, however different, can be reached only from the present. The greater the leap into the unknown, the stronger the takeoff has to be. The time dimension endows the managerial decision with its special characteristics. It is the act in which the manager integrates present and future."

## THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Why is educational planning necessary, then? The need for long-range comprehensive planning arose with the intensified complexities of modern technological society. Problems such as population, manpower needs, ecology, decreasing natural resources, and haphazard application of scientific developments--all place demands on educational institutions for solution. The administrative job of the school administrator is to optimize the yield from

resources available to the district. This, we are usually told, especially by economists, means efficiency; that is, doing better what is already being done. It means focus on costs. But the optimizing approach should focus on effectiveness. This does not deprecate efficiency. Even the healthiest business, the business with the greatest effectiveness, can well die of poor efficiency, but even the most efficient business cannot survive, let alone succeed, if it is efficient in doing the wrong things; that is, if it lacks effectiveness. No amount of efficiency would have enabled the manufacturer of buggy whips to survive.

Effectiveness is the foundation of success--efficiency is a minimum condition for survival after success has been achieved. Efficiency is concerned with doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things.

Education has entered into a period of complexity that will not permit a random process of problem-solving. If in education we can consider ourselves as shapers of events we must possess three unique areas of special knowledge. These areas include:

(1) Comprehension of contemporary scientific methods and ability to use them with facility.

(2) A knowledge of comparative values and value systems, in order to facilitate rational decisions about community goals.

(3) An understanding of continuities and discontinuities, trends, and directions of change in human affairs so as to apprehend emerging possibilities.

## SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Developing goals and objectives in the planning process is imperative if we are to follow a course of action that at some future time will show results of planning. Goals give us direction and objectives operationalize goals into measurable achievement and results. By providing direction, objectives are not much different from that of the flight plan which charters the course of the jet from Chicago to New York. Ninety-seven percent of all flight plans are accurately followed; however, if the pilot encounters heavy winds, he will adjust accordingly and fly several thousand feet higher; or if New York is fogged in, the pilot may opt to land in Boston. Whatever the situation, we can look at objectives like a flight plan. We would not, or should not start out without one.

Permit me to give you a candid example of how the Longview School District views how goals and objectives give continuity and direction to the District. A citizen task force in 1975 surveyed the public, prioritized their concerns and thoughts about current and future School District operations. Eleven School District goals were generated and adopted by the Board of Directors. These goals, like many in districts throughout the Nation, are quite ubiquitous and seem idealistic in nature. However, these goals do provide the benchmarks needed to guide the Board of Directors and staff toward the results, no matter how idealistic, seen desirable by the community.

The District is now involved in writing program goals for all instructional programs in the District. We are also involved administratively in completing a management system that specifically sets targets/objectives

which degenerate into work plans and are the undergirding basis for moving the District toward achievement of District goals and program goals.

Each year the Board of Education sets priority goals and objectives that in turn guide the Superintendent, his administrative staff, and all other certified and classified staff members toward common ends for that particular year. Keep in mind that these yearly short-range goals are directly tied into District long-range goals of the School District, as viewed by the community and staff.

The key to successful long-range comprehensive planning is commitment. No matter how one looks at a plan, it is just that--a plan; that is, good intentions, unless it degenerates into work. The test of any plan is whether the administrator or board of education actually commits resources to action which will bring results in the future. Unless these commitments are made, we end up with only promises and hopes, but no plan.

## DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

To understand the meaning of planning, one must consider its dimensions, which include the range and aptitude of the various characteristics associated with planning as they have been described. Banghart & Trull have selected eight dimensions of educational planning that give reasonable assurance of a comprehensive and efficient plan.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Every problem has some significance. The degree of significance, however, depends on the social importance of the proposed educational objective. To achieve this objective, the decision-maker must have access to

clear-cut guidelines and the proposed criteria for evaluation. Once the decision has been made and the proposed objective reached, any educational observer can then evaluate the contribution made by planning and hence judge its significance by the criteria that were established during the planning process.

FEASIBILITY

Assuming a plan is significant and offers the planners sufficient guidelines based on analytical studies and appropriate procedures, the next relevant question is whether the plan is feasible (i.e., cost, time, materials, resources).

RELEVANCE

The increased use of technology and sophisticated planning techniques has augmented the concept of relevance. The concept of relevance is absolutely essential to the appropriate implementation of an educational plan.

DEFINITIVENESS

All conceivable contingencies, obviously, cannot be built into the educational plan. Great care, however, should be taken to identify the maximum number of contingencies to be given prior consideration. The concept of definitiveness minimizes the occurrence of unexpected events that could divert resources from the planning objective.

PARSIMONIOUSNESS

The principle of parsimony in educational planning states that the plan should be outlined in the simplest manner.

ADAPTABILITY

The educational plan should be dynamic rather than static; it should be constantly undergoing change as information is fed back into the system. Through the use of a variety of processes, the adaptable or flexible plan can be designed to avoid the unexpected.

TIME

Associated with time are several important factors. One aspect of time deals with the natural cycle of the subject matter under planning. Another is the immediate need to change an unbearable situation. For example, busing students to achieve appropriate racial mixing. Yet another time factor is the limitations of educational planners in predicting the future.

MONITORING

Monitoring involves the establishment of educational criteria to assure that the various components of the plan are working effectively.

SUMMARY

While this presentation advances the idea that the implementation of appropriate planning strategies can increase the probability that local school districts will successfully accomplish their mission, it does not guarantee that the developers and consumers of school programs and services will equally agree to the qualitative nature of the services provided. Recognizing this reality does not mean a defensive, status-quo posture must or should be assumed. Virtually every district knows of managerial, administrative, and instructional deficiencies that exist and which should be addressed, even if total satisfaction of all needs can never realistically be attained. There is no more opportune time than the present to start the process of planned educational change.

Long-range comprehensive planning does not substitute facts for judgment, does not substitute science for the school administrator. It does not even lessen the importance and role of administrative ability, courage, experience, intuition, or even hunch--just as scientific biology and systematic medicine have not lessened the importance of these qualities in the individual physician. On the contrary, the systematic organization of the planning job and the supply of knowledge to it strengthen the administrators' judgment, leadership, and vision.

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